Technical Guides for Exterior Alterations

A Practical Series for the Preservation and Maintenance of Rockville's Historic Resources

7: Landscaping

Background

Appropriate and attractive landscaping within Rockville's historic districts complements the buildings and enhances the setting. Mature landscape material is often indicative of an older neighborhood or property. The Historic District Commission (HDC) encourages tree and landscape preservation because it contributes to the distinctive character of the historic district. In general, the HDC reviews proposed alterations visible from a public right-

of-way and/or the removal of mature trees and shrubs, although there are special instances where proposed alterations to a historic garden would be reviewed by the HDC.

Species of trees and shrubs mature at differing rates, and each project must be evaluated on the particular historic characteristics of the site. In general, the HDC adheres to City policy to review the proposed removal of trees with

a minimum of 12″ trunk dbh (diameter at breast height). Mature shrubs are identified on the basis of species and size, but may have varying importance depending on quantity and siting within the particular landscape. The significance of both trees and mature shrubs will be evaluated according to the HDC *Adopted Architectural*

Design Guidelines and the criteria for historic district designation, including whether or not the particular tree or shrub is a "familiar feature of the neighborhood." Trees certified as diseased and/or hazardous by the City Forester may be removed with Staff level approval.

Historic Landscapes

The ideal landscaping retains mature live trees and shrubs, favoring replacement of historic elements with material of similar type. In the case of overgrown original plantings, pruning may correct the situation, or some replacement plants may be desirable.
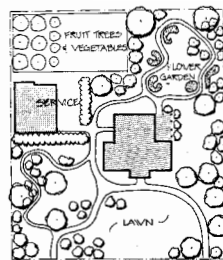
The following information, taken from *The Original Old House Journal Compendium*, Vol. 1, is provided for a reference to historical landscaping.

"Before 1840 much of our most popular plant material was unknown during the young days of our republic. This includes such favorites as Japanese Yew, Spirea, Weigela, White Wisteria, Hall's Honeysuckle, Pachysandra, and generally speaking, plants from the Orient, most of which were introduced in the 19th century. Furthermore, a large number of our native shrubs and plants appear to have been known but little used. Included in this group are Junipers, Mountain Laurel, Rhododendrons, etc. Favored garden plants were those brought from England that proved hardy here such as Mulberry and Boxwood.
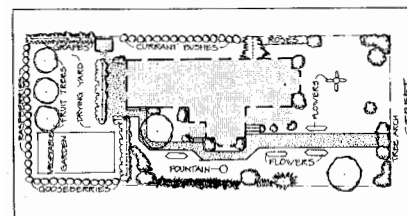
By the 1850's, Victorian gardens and landscape designs were influenced by Andrew Jackson Downing's work. He believed that architectural styles and landscape improvements should complement each other. For example, the classical styles such as Greek

Revival should represent a harmonious and graceful setting, whereas, the irregular architectural styles, such as Gothic, would be more appropriate with an unsymmetrical more picturesque design.

The illustrations below are examples of houses and sites reflecting some of Downing's earlier concepts. In the 1880's, trees were strategically placed in the lawn to provide shade or complement architecture by providing a backdrop or accent. Large, stately trees (American elm and European beech) were extensively used with the Queen Anne style house."

Plan of a "Suburban Villa" and grounds, ca. 1850.

Plan of a House and small Suburban Lot, ca. 1880.

7: Landscaping

Historic Landscapes *(continued)*

Shrubs also became increasingly popular. Naturalistic plantings of shrubs in clumps and groups were used to screen undesirable views, to delineate property boundaries and to direct the view to and from the street. Single shrubs were used as accents in the lawn and as centerpieces for garden beds.

Source: The Original Old House Journal Compendium

HDC Policy

When substantial grading is envisioned, the HDC shall be consulted. Care should be taken to minimize the effects on the environmental setting and the buildings. In some instances, a grading permit also must be obtained from the City.

When planning your landscape, please consider the following:

- Select edging and mulch materials that are historically accurate, especially when visible from public way; and, avoid modern plastic or synthetic edgings, marble, lava, crushed rock, or other historically unsuitable ground covers.
- Replace dead trees or shrubs with inkind or similar species.
- Seek HDC Review and approval for the removal of mature trees/shrubs.
- Plant historically accurate species.

Certificate of Approval

PLEASE NOTE – With typical yearly planting and garden maintenance, no Certificate of Approval is required.

If substantial changes are requested, or if hardscape such as garden walls, patios, sidewalks and garden structures are desired, the application for a Certificate of Approval must include the following:

1. Site plan with existing conditions, with tree species and tree diameters identified

Certificate of Approval *(continued)*

2. Site plan with proposed plan

3. Description of proposed grading

4. Schedule for work and contractor

Some Plants in Use Before 1840

Flowers

Balsam	Jonquil
Batchelor's Button	Larkspur
(formerly Cornflower, Blue Bottle)	Lily-of-the-Valley
Calendula	Lupine
Canterbury Bells	Marigold--
China Aster	African, French, Sweet
Chinese Lantern Plant	Scented
Chrysanthemum	Mignonette
Crocus	Morning Glory
Delphinium	Narcissus
Forget-Me-Not	Peony
Four O'Clocks	Poppy; Opium, Rose
(formerly Marvel-of-Peru)	Salvia
Geranium--	Snapdragon
Rose, Lemon, Nutmeg, Mint, Garden	Sunflower
Grape Hyacinth	Sweet William
Heliotrope	Sweet Violet
Honesty--Money Plant	Tulip
Iris--Florentine, German, Sweet	Zinnia, Violet, Red, Yellow

Trees, Shrubs and Vines

American Holly
Bittersweet
Catalpa
English Ivy
Flowering Quince
Gingko
Hawthorn
Horse Chestnut
Mulberry
Rose-of-Sharon
Spice Bush, Carolina All Spice
Tree of Heaven
Trumpet Vine
Tulip Poplar
Weeping Willow
Witchhazel

Herbs

Garlic	Garden Parsley
Chive	Anise
Dill	Rosemary
Camomile	Garden Sage
Tarragon	Summer
Savory	
Caraway	Winter Savory
Lavender	Tansy
Sweet Marjoram	Thyme
Catnip	Common Rue
Sweet Basil	Peppermint

7: Landscaping (continued)

Tax Credit Information

Tax credits may apply. To maintain eligibility, please have before and after photographs of the work. Obtain HDC approval prior to undertaking the work if a COA is required, and make sure you follow all zoning requirements. Work done without a required HDC Certificate of Approval is not eligible for the tax credits. Forms are available on the City Web site or at the CPDS information desk.

Contact Us

For additional information and questions, please contact:
  Historic District Commission
  Department of Community Planning and
  Development Services

  Rockville City Hall
  111 Maryland Avenue
  Rockville, MD 20850
  240-314-8230 voice
  240-314-8210 fax
  history@rockvillemd.gov

Additional information

The City of Rockville also encourages the planting of native species, and the avoidance of exotic invasive species. Please call the City Forester at 240-314-8705 for further information

Adopted Architectural Design Guidelines for the Exterior Rehabilitation of Buildings in Rockville's Historic Districts, Rockville Historic District Commission, 1977.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation, National Park Service, 1995 - www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_index.htm

NPS Preservation Briefs Series - www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm

No.36 - Protecting Cultural Landscapes

For general information about historic gardens and plant material through the 19th century, see the Center for Historic Plants at Montecello, at http://www.monticello.org/chp/index.html